



THE AUTHOR AND HER SONS

WOMAN AND THE NEW RACE

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CHAPTER III

THE MATERIALS OF THE NEW RACE

EACH of us has an ideal of what the American of the future should be. We have been told times without number that out of the mixture of stocks, the intermingling of ideas and aspirations, there is to come a race greater than any which has contributed to the population of the United States. What is the basis for this hope that is so generally indulged in? If the hope is founded upon realities, how may it be realized? To understand the difficulties and the obstacles to be overcome before the dream of a greater race in America can be attained, is to understand something of the task before the women who shall give birth to that race.

What material is there for a greater American race? What elements make up our present millions? Where do they live? How do they live? In what direction does our national civilization bend their ideals? What

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is the effect of the "melting pot" upon the foreigner, once he begins to "melt"? Are we now producing a freer, juster, more intelligent, more idealistic, creative people out of the varied ingredients here?

Before we can answer these questions, we must consider briefly the races which have contributed to American population.

Among our more than 100,000,000 population are Negroes, Indians, Chinese and other colored people to the number of 11,000,000. There are also 14,500,000 persons of foreign birth. Besides these there are 14,000,000 children of foreign-born parents and 6,500,000 persons whose fathers or mothers were born on foreign soil, making a total of 46,000,000 people of foreign stock. Fifty per cent of our population is of the native white strain.

Of the foreign stock in the United States, the last general census, compiled in 1910, shows that 25.7 per cent was German, 14 per cent was Irish, 8.5 per cent was Russian or Finnish, 7.2 was English, 6.5 per cent Italian and 6.2 per cent Austrian. The Abstract of the same census points out several significant facts. The Western European strains in this

country are represented by a majority of native-born children of foreign-born or mixed parentage. This is because the immigration from those sources has been checked. On the other hand, immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, including Russia and Finland, increased 175.4 per cent from 1900 to 1910. During that period, the slums of Europe dumped their submerged inhabitants into America at a rate almost double that of the preceding decade, and the flow was still increasing at the time the census was taken. So it is more than likely that when the next census is taken it will be found that following 1910 there was an even greater flow from Spain, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Russia, Finland, and other countries where the iron hand of economic and political tyrannies had crushed great populations into ignorance and want. These peoples have not been in the United States long enough to produce great families. The census of 1920 will in all probability tell a story of a greater and more serious problem than did the last.

Over one-fourth of all the immigrants over fourteen years of age, admitted during the two

decades preceding 1910, were illiterate. Of the 8,398,000 who arrived in the 1900-1910 period, 2,238,000 could not read or write. There were 1,600,000 illiterate foreigners in the United States when the 1910 census was taken. Do these elements give promise of a better race? Are we doing anything genuinely constructive to overcome this situation?

Two-thirds of the white foreign stock in the United States live in cities. Four-fifths of the populations of Chicago and New York are of this stock. More than two-thirds of the populations of Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, Newark, Jersey City, Providence, Worcester, Scranton, Paterson, Fall River, Lowell, Cambridge, Bridgeport, St. Paul, Minneapolis and San Francisco are of other than native white ancestry. Of the fifty principal cities of the United States there are only fourteen in which fifty per cent of the population is of unmixed native white parentage.

Only one state in the Union — North Carolina — has less than one per cent of the white foreign stock. New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode

Island, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, the Dakotas, Montana and Utah have more than fifty per cent foreign stock. Eleven states, including those on the Pacific Coast, have from 35 to 50 per cent. Maine, Ohio and Kansas have from 25 to 35 per cent. Maryland, Indiana, Missouri and Texas have from 15 to 25 per cent. These proportions are increasing rather than decreasing, owing to the extraordinarily high birth rate of the foreign strains.

A special analysis of 1915 vital statistics for certain states, in the World Almanac for 1918, shows that foreign-born mothers gave birth to nearly 62 per cent of the children born in Connecticut, nearly 58 per cent in Massachusetts, nearly 33 per cent in Michigan, nearly 58 per cent in Rhode Island, more than 43 per cent in New Hampshire, more than 54 per cent in New York and more than 38 per cent in Pennsylvania.

All these figures, be it remembered, fail to include foreign stock of the second generation after landing. If the statistics for children who have native parents but foreign-born grandparents, or who have one foreign-born

parent, were given, they would doubtless leave but a small percentage of births from stocks native to the soil for several generations.

Immigrants or their children constitute the majority of workers employed in many of our industries. "Seven out of ten of those who work in our iron and steel industries are drawn from this class," says the National Geographic Magazine (February, 1917), "seven out of ten of our bituminous coal miners belong to it. Three out of four who work in packing towns were born abroad or are children of those who were born abroad; four out of five of those who make our silk goods, seven out of eight of those employed in woolen mills, nine out of ten of those who refine our petroleum, and nineteen out of twenty of those who manufacture our sugar are immigrants or the children of immigrants." And it might have shown a similarly high percentage of those in the ready-made clothing industries, railway and public works construction of the less skilled sort, and a number of others.

That these foreigners who have come in hordes have brought with them their ignorance of hygiene and modern ways of living and that

they are handicapped by religious superstitions is only too true. But they also bring in their hearts a desire for freedom from all the tyrannies that afflict the earth. They would not be here if they did not bear within them the hardihood of pioneers, a courage of no mean order. They have the simple faith that in America they will find equality, liberty and an opportunity for a decent livelihood. And they have something else. The cell plasms of these peoples are freighted with the potentialities of the best in Old World civilization. They come from lands rich in the traditions of courage, of art, music, letters, science and philosophy. Americans no longer consider themselves cultured unless they have journeyed to these lands to find access to the treasures created by men and women of this same blood. The immigrant brings the possibilities of all these things to our shores, but where is the opportunity to reproduce in the New World the cultures of the old?

What opportunities have we given to these peoples to enrich our civilization? We have greeted them as "a lot of ignorant foreigners," we have shouted at, hustled and kicked them.

Our industries have taken advantage of their ignorance of the country's ways to take their toil in mills and mines and factories at starvation wages. We have herded them into slums to become diseased, to become social burdens or to die. We have huddled them together like rabbits to multiply their numbers and their misery. Instead of saying that we Americanize them, we should confess that we animalize them. The only freedom we seem to have given them is the freedom to make heavier and more secure their chains. What hope is there for racial progress in this human material, treated more carelessly and brutally than the cheapest factory product?

Nor are all our social handicaps bound up in the immigrant.

There were in the United States, when the Federal Industrial Relations Committee finished its work in 1915, several million migratory workers, most of them white, many of them married but separated from their families, who were compelled, like themselves, to struggle with dire want.

There were in 1910 more than 2,353,000 tenant farmers, two-thirds of whom lived and

worked under the terrible conditions which the Industrial Relations Commission's report showed to prevail in the South and Southwest. These tenant farmers, as the report showed, were always in want, and were compelled by the very terms of the prevailing tenant contracts to produce children who must go to the fields and do the work of adults. The census proved that this tenancy was on the increase, the number of tenants in all but the New England and Middle Atlantic States having increased approximately 90 per cent from 1900 to 1910.

Moreover, there were in the United States in 1910, 5,516,163 illiterates. Of these 1,878,884 were of pure native white stock. In some states in the South as much as 29 per cent of the population is illiterate, many of these, of course, being Negroes.

There is still another factor to be considered — a factor which because of its great scope is more ominous than any yet mentioned. This is the underpaid mass of workers in the United States — workers whose low wages are forcing them deeper into want each day. Let Senator Borah, not a radical nor even a reformer, but

a leader of the Republican party, tell the story. "Fifty-seven per cent of the families in the United States have incomes of \$800 or less," said he in a speech before the Senate, August 24, 1917, "Seventy per cent of the families of our country have incomes of \$1,000 or less. Tell me how a man so situated can have shelter for his family; how he can provide food and clothing. He is an industrial peon. His home is scant and pinched beyond the power of language to tell. He sees his wife and children on the ragged edge of hunger from week to week and month to month. If sickness comes, he faces suicide or crime. He cannot educate his children; he cannot fit them for citizenship; he cannot even fit them as soldiers to die for their country.

"It is the tragedy of our whole national life — how these people live in such times as these. We have not yet gathered the fruits of such an industrial condition in this country. We have been saved thus far by reason of the newness of our national life, our vast public lands now almost exhausted, our great natural resources now fast being seized and held, but the hour of reckoning will come."

Senator Borah was thinking, doubtless, of open revolution, of bloodshed and the destruction of property. In a far more terrible sense, the reckoning which he has referred to is already upon us. The ills we suffer as the result of the conditions now prevailing in the United States are appalling in their sum.

It is these conditions that produce the 8,000,000 child laborers of the United States; child slaves who undergo hardships that blight them physically and mentally, leaving them fit only to produce human beings whose deficiencies and misfortunes will exceed their own.

From these same elements, living under these same conditions come the feeble-minded and other defectives. Just how many feeble-minded there are in the United States, no one knows, because no attempt has ever been made to give public care to all of them, and families are more inclined to conceal than to reveal the mental defects of their members. Estimates vary from 350,000 at the present time to nearly 400,000 as early as 1890, Henry H. Goddard, Ph. D., of the Vineland, N. J., Training School, being authority for the latter statement. Only 34,137 of these unfortunates were

under institutional care in the United States in 1916, the rest being free to propagate their kind — piling up public burdens for future generations. The feeble-minded are notoriously prolific in reproduction. The close relationship between poverty and ignorance and the production of feeble-minded is shown by Anne Moore, Ph. D., in a report to the Public Education Association of New York in 1911. She found that an overwhelming proportion of the classified feeble-minded children in New York schools came from large families living in overcrowded slum conditions, and that only a small percentage were born of native parents.

Sixty thousand prostitutes go and come anew each year in the United States. This army of unfortunates, as social workers and scientists testify, come from families living under like conditions of want.

In the New York City schools alone in December, 1916, 61 per cent of the children were suffering from undernourishment and 21 per cent in immediate danger of it. These facts, also the result of the conditions outlined, were discovered by the city Bureau of Child Hygiene.

Another item in the sordid list is that of venereal disease. In his pamphlet entitled "*The Venereal Diseases*," issued in 1918, Dr. Hermann M. Biggs head of the New York State Department of Health quoted authorities who gave estimates of the amount of syphilis and gonorrhoea in the United States. One says that 60 per cent of the men contract one disease or the other at some time. Another said that 40 per cent of the population of New York City had syphilis, one of the most terrible of all maladies. Poverty, delayed marriage, prostitution—a brief and terrible chain accounts for this scourge.

Finally, there is tuberculosis, bred by bad housing conditions and contributed to in frightful measure by poor food and unhealthy surroundings during the hours of employment. Dr. Frederick L. Hoffman, director of the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis and foremost statistical authority upon tuberculosis in the United States, says: "We know of 2,000,000 tubercular persons in the United States."

Does this picture horrify the reader? This is not the whole truth. A few scattered statis-

tics lack the power to reflect the broken lives of overworked fathers, the ceaseless, increasing pain of overburdened mothers and the agony of childhood fighting its way against the handicaps of ill health, insufficient food, inadequate training and stifling toil.

Can we expect to remedy this situation by dismissing the problem of the submerged native elements with legislative palliatives or treating it with careless scorn? Do we better it by driving out of the immigrant's heart the dream of liberty that brought him to our shores? Do we solve the problem by giving him instead of an opportunity to develop his own culture, low wages, a home in the slums and those pseudo-patriotic preachments which constitute our machine-made "Americanization"?

Every detail of this sordid situation means a problem that must be solved before we can even clear the way for a greater race in America. Nor is there any hope of solving any of these problems if we continue to attack them in the usual way.

Men have sentimentalized about them and legislated upon them. They have denounced

them and they have applied reforms. But it has all been ridiculously, cruelly futile.

This is the condition of things for which those stand who demand more and more children. Each child born under such conditions but makes them worse — each child in its own person suffers the consequence of the intensified evils.

If we are to develop in America a new race with a racial soul, we must keep the birth rate within the scope of our ability to understand as well as to educate. We must not encourage reproduction beyond our capacity to assimilate our numbers so as to make the coming generation into such physically fit, mentally capable, socially alert individuals as are the ideal of a democracy.

The intelligence of a people is of slow evolutionary development — it lags far behind the reproductive ability. It is far too slow to cope with conditions created by an increasing population, unless that increase is carefully regulated.

We must, therefore, not permit an increase in population that we are not prepared to care for to the best advantage — that we are not

prepared to do justice to, educationally and economically. We must popularize birth control thinking. We must not leave it haphazardly to be the privilege of the already privileged. We must put this means of freedom and growth into the hands of the masses.

We must set motherhood free. We must give the foreign and submerged mother knowledge that will enable her to prevent bringing to birth children she does not want. We know that in each of these submerged and semisubmerged elements of the population there are rich factors of racial culture. Motherhood is the channel through which these cultures flow. Motherhood, when free to choose the father, free to choose the time and the number of children who shall result from the union, automatically works in wondrous ways. It refuses to bring forth weaklings; refuses to bring forth slaves; refuses to bear children who must live under the conditions described. It withholds the unfit, brings forth the fit; brings few children into homes where there is not sufficient to provide for them. Instinctively it avoids all those things which multiply racial handicaps. Under such circumstances we can hope

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that the "melting pot" will refine. We shall see that it will save the precious metals of racial culture, fused into an amalgam of physical perfection, mental strength and spiritual progress. Such an American race, containing the best of all racial elements, could give to the world a vision and a leadership beyond our present imagination.

CHAPTER IV

TWO CLASSES OF WOMEN

THUS far we have been discussing mainly one class in America—the workers. Most women who belong to the workers' families have no accurate or reliable knowledge of contraceptives, and are, therefore, bringing children into the world so rapidly that they, their families and their class are overwhelmed with numbers. Out of these numbers, as has been shown, have grown many of the burdens with which society in general is weighted; out of them have come, also, the want, disease, hard living conditions and general misery of the workers.

The women of this class are the greatest sufferers of all. Not only do they bear the material hardships and deprivations in common with the rest of the family, but in the case of the mother, these are intensified. It is the man and the child who have first call upon the insufficient amount of food. It is the man and

the child who get the recreation, if there is any to be had, for the man's hours of labor are usually limited by law or by his labor union.

It is the woman who suffers first from hunger, the woman whose clothing is least adequate, the woman who must work all hours, even though she is not compelled, as in the case of millions, to go into a factory to add to her husband's scanty income. It is she, too, whose health breaks first and most hopelessly, under the long hours of work, the drain of frequent childbearing, and often almost constant nursing of babies. There are no eight-hour laws to protect the mother against overwork and toil in the home; no laws to protect her against ill health and the diseases of pregnancy and reproduction. In fact there has been almost no thought or consideration given for the protection of the mother in the home of the workingman.

There are no general health statistics to tell the full story of the physical ills suffered by women as a result of too great reproductivity. But we get some light upon conditions through the statistics on maternal mortality, compiled by Dr. Grace L. Meigs, for the Children's

Bureau of the United States Department of Labor. These figures do not include the deaths of women suffering from diseases complicated by pregnancy.

"In 1913, in this country at least 15,000 women, it is estimated, died from conditions caused by childbirth; about 7,000 of these died from childbed fever and the remaining 8,000 from diseases now known to be to a great extent preventable or curable," says Dr. Meigs in her summary. "Physicians and statisticians agree that these figures are a *great underestimate*."

Think of it — the needless deaths of 15,000 women a "great underestimate"! Yet even this number means that virtually every hour of the day and night two women die as the result of childbirth in the healthiest and supposedly the most progressive country in the world.

It is apparent that Dr. Meigs leaves out of consideration the many thousands of deaths each year of women who become pregnant while suffering from tuberculosis. Dr. S. Adolphus Knopf, addressing the forty-fourth annual convention of the American Public

Health Association, in Cincinnati in 1916, called attention to the fact that some authors hold that "65 per cent of the women afflicted with tuberculosis, even when afflicted only in the relatively early and curable stages, die as the result of pregnancy which could have been avoided and their lives saved had they but known some means of prevention." Nor were syphilis, various kidney and heart disorders and other diseases, often rendered fatal by pregnancy, taken into account by Dr. Meigs' survey.

Still, leaving out all the hundreds of thousands of women who die because pregnancy has complicated serious diseases, Dr. Meigs finds that "in 1918, the death rate per 100,000 of the population from all conditions caused by childbirth was little lower than that from typhoid fever. This rate would be almost quadrupled if only the group of the population which can be affected, women of child-bearing ages, were considered. In 1913, childbirth caused more deaths among women 15 to 44 years old than any disease except tuberculosis."

From what sort of homes come these deaths

from childbirth? Most of them occur in overcrowded dwellings, where food, care, sanitation, nursing and medical attention are inadequate. Where do we find most of the tuberculosis and much of the other disease which is aggravated by pregnancy? In the same sort of home.

The deadly chain of misery is all too plain to anyone who takes the trouble to observe it. A woman of the working class marries and with her husband lives in a degree of comfort upon his earnings. Her household duties are not beyond her strength. Then the children begin to come — one, two, three, four, possibly five or more. The earnings of the husband do not increase as rapidly as the family does. Food, clothing and general comfort in the home grow less as the numbers of the family increase. The woman's work grows heavier, and her strength is less with each child. Possibly — probably — she has to go into a factory to add to her husband's earnings. There she toils, doing her housework at night. Her health goes, and the crowded conditions and lack of necessities in the home help to bring about disease — especially tubercu-

losis. Under the circumstances, the woman's chances of recovering from each succeeding childbirth grow less. Less too are the chances of the child's surviving, as shown by tables in another chapter. Unwanted children, poverty, ill health, misery, death — these are the links in the chain, and they are common to most of the families in the class described in the preceding chapter.

Nor is the full story of the woman's sufferings yet told. Grievous as is her material condition, her spiritual deprivations are still greater. By the very fact of its existence, mother love demands its expression toward the child. By that same fact, it becomes a necessary factor in the child's development. The mother of too many children, in a crowded home where want, ill health and antagonism are perpetually created, is deprived of this simplest personal expression. She can give nothing to her child of herself, of her personality. Training is impossible and sympathetic guidance equally so. Instead, such a mother is tired, nervous, irritated and ill-tempered; a deterrent, often, instead of a

help to her children. Motherhood becomes a disaster and childhood a tragedy.

It goes without saying that this woman loses also all opportunity of personal expression outside her home. She has neither a chance to develop social qualities nor to indulge in social pleasures. The feminine element in her — that spirit which blossoms forth now and then in women free from such burdens — cannot assert itself. She can contribute nothing to the wellbeing of the community. She is a breeding machine and a drudge — she is not an asset but a liability to her neighborhood, to her class, to society. She can be nothing as long as she is denied means of limiting her family.

In sharp contrast with these women who ignorantly bring forth large families and who thereby enslave themselves, we find a few women who have one, two or three children or no children at all. These women, with the exception of the childless ones, live full-rounded lives. They are found not only in the ranks of the rich and the well-to-do, but in the ranks of labor as well. They have but one point of basic difference from their enslaved sisters —

they are not burdened with the rearing of large families.

We have no need to call upon the historian, the sociologist nor the statistician for our knowledge of this situation. We meet it every day in the ordinary routine of our lives. The women who are the great teachers, the great writers, the artists, musicians, physicians, the leaders of public movements, the great suffragists, reformers, labor leaders and revolutionaries are those who are not compelled to give lavishly of their physical and spiritual strength in bearing and rearing large families. The situation is too familiar for discussion. Where a woman with a large family is contributing directly to the progress of her times or the betterment of social conditions, it is usually because she has sufficient wealth to employ trained nurses, governesses, and others who perform the duties necessary to child rearing. She is a rarity and is universally recognized as such.

The women with small families, however, are free to make their choice of those social pleasures which are the right of every human being and necessary to each one's full develop-

ment. They can be and are, each according to her individual capacity, comrades and companions to their husbands — a privilege denied to the mother of many children. Theirs is the opportunity to keep abreast of the times, to make and cultivate a varied circle of friends, to seek amusements as suits their taste and means, to know the meaning of real recreation. All these things remain unrealized desires to the prolific mother.

Women who have a knowledge of contraceptives are not compelled to make the choice between a maternal experience and a marred love life; they are not forced to balance motherhood against social and spiritual activities. Motherhood is for them to choose, as it should be for every woman to choose. Choosing to become mothers, they do not thereby shut themselves away from thorough companionship with their husbands, from friends, from culture, from all those manifold experiences which are necessary to the completeness and the joy of life.

Fit mothers of the race are these, the courted comrades of the men they choose, rather than the "slaves of slaves." For theirs is the magic

power — the power of limiting their families to such numbers as will permit them to live full-rounded lives. Such lives are the expression of the feminine spirit which is woman *and all of her* — not merely art, nor professional skill, nor intellect — but all that woman is, or may achieve.

CHAPTER V

THE WICKEDNESS OF CREATING LARGE FAMILIES

THE most serious evil of our times is that of encouraging the bringing into the world of large families. The most immoral practice of the day is breeding too many children. These statements may startle those who have never made a thorough investigation of the problem. They are, nevertheless, well considered, and the truth of them is abundantly borne out by an examination of facts and conditions which are part of everyday experience or observation.

The immorality of large families lies not only in their injury to the members of those families but in their injury to society. If one were asked offhand to name the greatest evil of the day one might, in the light of one's education by the newspapers, or by agitators, make any one of a number of replies. One might say prostitution, the oppression of labor, child labor, or war. Yet the poverty and neglect